

Waterfront Wails and Other Verses

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By RONALD KENVYN

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1918

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*To the men of the British Merchant Service, who
have proved themselves indomitable,
this little volume is dedicated.*

Waterfront Wails and Other Verses

1. The Merchant Service Man.
2. A Honolulu Hula.
3. The Stevedore.
4. Sailing Day.
5. Home at Last.
6. Tramp Steamers.
7. Modern Privateers.
8. Coasting.
9. The Shellback's Serenade.
10. The Brassbound 'Prentice Boy.
11. Circus Bill's Career.
12. The Prevaricating Coon.
13. The Song of the Second Mate.
14. A Longshore Litany.
15. Joys of a Sailor's Life.
16. The Bluenose Mate.
17. The Passing of Sail.
18. Shanghaied.
19. The Shellback's Christmas.
20. Missing.
21. The Millionaire A. B.
22. Run Down.
23. The Southern Run.
24. A Temperance Launching.
25. My Yacht.
26. Winter Cruising.
27. A Spring Song.
28. Song of a Sweater.
29. The Capilano Road.
30. The Coast of Romance.
31. An Aerial Love Song.
32. H. M. S. New Zealand (Vancouver 1913).
33. H. M. C. S. Rainbow (War, 1914).
34. Got 'Em at Larst (Falkland Islands, December, 1914).
35. Reinforcements of the Seas.
36. They Struggled On (Scott Antarctic Expedition).
37. Khaki and Kilt (August, 1914).
38. Our Dead (Ypres, April, 1915).
39. In Memoriam.
40. Only a Year Ago (August, 1915).
41. A Patch and a Smile.
42. To a Shipmate.
43. A Cheery Chanty.
44. Two Winds.



The Merchant Service Man

The merchant service sailor
 Is a rough and ready man ;
 He doesn't wear a uniform
 But does the best he can.
 And in the days before the war
 He sometimes acted ruddy raw
 And many prayers were offered for
 The Merchant Service Man.

The merchant service sailor
 Is from Cardiff or the Tyne,
 From Liverpool or London Town,
 From Cork or Auld Lang Syne ;
 And life for him was not a joke,
 He was a lusty, crusty bloke,
 And frequently was known to choke
 On beef well soaked in brine.

The merchant service sailor
 Faces danger every trip ;
 He keeps our commerce moving
 And he breaks the diver's grip.
 He dares the mine and submarine,
 The open boats which take it green,
 The wet and cold which freeze his bones,
 The daily touch of Davy Jones,
 And when he's rescued, warmed and fed,
 He shakes his damned old ugly head
 And joins another ship.

A Honolulu Hula

Oh, I'm sick of fog and rainstorms, and I think I'm getting
brainstorms

A-hustling for a living in this bumpy, jumpy land,
Where the only talk they sling you is the money it will bring
you

If you buy a double corner and join the boosters' band.
I'm a-moping and a-pining for to see the sun a-shining
And to listen to the trade-wind a-snorting through the trees,
And to see the rollers shattered on the reef which they have
battered

And the spindrift whirl to seaward as it feels the tropic breeze.

It would just move me to laughter for to find a fore-and-after,
Which was bound to Honolulu or some other tropic isle;
Then I'd pack my bag so nifty, though her deckload might be
shifty,

And I'd sign aboard that packet with a forty-horse-power
smile.

For my heart would be a-singing as the schooner went
a-winging

To a blue-and-golden country which I only once did see,
But I left my heart behind me, and the bloke that wants to find
me,

Must look for me 'tween latitudes nineteen and twenty-three.

The Stevedore

There's a gentleman down on the waterfront with a bright and expansive smile,

He is one of the best and can handle a jest in a truly nautical style.

He's an ex-passed master mariner, who has anchored himself ashore

And taken to piracy on the side—they call him The Stevedore.

He's the first aboard when a vessel arrives, and the last ashore when she sails,

And he keeps a sample of all her gear from the galley supplies to nails;

The amount of his bill makes the skipper feel ill, and use language that's far from polite,

But this sort of strife is the essence of life to this up-to-date pirating knight.

If the skipper protests—well, the stevedore jests and invites him uptown to dine,

But between me and you, by the time they are through, it's the skipper who's buying the wine,

He's a full-fledged knight of the Blarney stone, and the very best sort of a chum;

May he never be missed from the waterfront for many a year to come!

Sailing Day

The bucking cargo winches are slinging in the freight,
The sailing time is posted and she isn't going to wait.
The passengers are yelling for the baggage they have missed,
And a pretty girl who knows the mate is waiting to be kissed.
The stevedore is cursing over freight that's going wrong
For Yokohama cargo has been stowed beneath Hongkong;
Unless you've business on the dock it's best to keep away,
For a trim, white-painted liner is going out today.

Fifteen hundred sacks of mail are shooting down the slide,
And there's got to be some hustling if she means to catch the
tide.

The language floating round the dock would raise a parson's
hair,
You're a dead one on the waterfront until you've learned to
swear!

An idler gets no sympathy, no matter where he goes,
For someone feeling grouchy runs a truck across his toes.
Then a waterfront policeman comes and bustles him about,
Oh! there isn't room for loafers when a liner's going out!

Home at Last

Wrapped in the gorgeous velvet robe of night,
The harbor drowns in its evening sleep,
The mountains rear their everlasting snows
Above the placid bosom of the deep.
Across the bay, along the Northern shore,
Like brilliant stars the lights begin to gleam;
The chiming of "eight bells" floats on the air
Re-echoed from the vessels in the stream.

Then, past the ghostly lighthouse on the point,
A fairy ship comes sliding into sight.
She floats amid the summer-scented gloom
With every deck a dazzling street of light.
The heaving lines come crashing on the wharf,
The ropes are run ashore and all made fast.
The jangling telegraph concludes its tale:
"Another voyage finished—home at last."

Tramp Steamers

Battered and salt encrusted,
 Whipped by the ocean breeze,
 We plough our endless furrows
 The Hoboes of the Seas.
 Grimy and foul and rusty,
 Quite unattractive in look,
 We're Messenger Boys of the Nations
 And know all the ports like a book.

Ten knots an hour is the limit
 Of our happy-go-lucky craft
 With an all-nation crowd in the foc'sle,
 And some hard-swearing officers aft.
 General cargo to Sydney,
 Back to the west coast with coal,
 North to Vancouver for lumber,
 Then westward to China we roll.

Taking our freights where we find 'em,
 And mighty small profit we earn,
 Sometimes the charters we work for
 Don't pay for the coal that we burn.
 Having no regular trade route,
 Hoping to get something soft,
 Reported at wide-scattered stations
 With a smoke-darkened house flag aloft.

In ports of all nations you find us
 Anchored in tiers in the stream,
 Or else getting rid of our cargoes
 While our time-rotten winches leak steam.
 Weaving the fabric of Empire
 Hard-driven ocean-stained boats,
 Without us you can not do business
 And—above us the Red Ensign floats.

The Modern Privateers

In the good old days of the buccaneers, a hundred years ago,
 A skipper's life was full of strife and often full of woe.
 The sight of a sail turned his bronzed cheek pale, and he
 squared his yards to the breeze,
 He was harried and hunted and made good sport for the high-
 waymen of the seas.
 If he won through these and reached his port, the skipper
 sighed relief,
 He had shown his heels to the pirate craft and dodged the
 ocean thief.
 And frigates tall and sullen forts stood guard upon his freight;
 He was free to sit in taverns cool and wondrous tales relate.
 The merchant skipper of today has an easier career,
 He has no pirate craft to dodge, no buccaneers to fear.
 And he is free upon the sea, but—when he hits the land,
 He finds a bunch of pirates there to grab him by the hand.
 And first he meets the butcher, who wants to sell him meat,
 The runner from the shipyard makes the robbery complete,
 The youth who peddles hardware is camping on his trail,
 The waterfront reporter may describe him in a "wail."
 And anything that may be left the druggist takes ashore,
 But the most successful pirate is the smiling stevedore.
 When that poor skipper gets away he leaves behind his
 "dough,"
 He might as well have sailed the seas a hundred years ago.

Coasting

The coastwise steamer is ablaze with light
 Which gilds the shimmering waters of the bay
 She's going on the northern trail tonight
 And life is strenuous getting her away.
 The sweating truckers hurry out the freight,
 And creaking cargo derricks sling it in,
 While passengers are pestering the mate
 And all is wild confusion, dust and din.

"Abandon hope all ye who enter here!"
 The arc lamps hiss and splutter overhead
 While choice expressions perforate the air
 And make a little Hades of the shed.
 It is a whirlwind scene to contemplate,
 A dozen baulky teams obstruct the floor,
 The wearied checkers find that they bring freight
 Which should have been delivered hours before.

Hour after hour the grinding toil goes on,
 Until the fifteen-minute whistle blows,
 The tired deckhands swing the gangplank in
 And out upon the coastwise trip she goes.
 Away up north in lonely camp and mine,
 'Tis "steamer day" relieves the dull routine.
 She brings the mails which kindle hope divine
 Or else recall the things which might have been.

The Shellback's Serenade

I'm only a poor old pier 'cad jump,
 A gnarled old sea dog, me;
 And I want you to know while I 'as you 'ere
 It's a 'ell of a life at sea.
 I've slept in fo'e'sles, man and boy,
 For forty years or so,
 And every time I've made my cross
 It's 'urted me to go.

But I arks wot chance 'as a shellback got
 Who was brought up to the trade?
 'E's bound to come to the beach again
 Whatever course 'e made.
 And 'e's 'ardly 'eld a glass o' beer
 In 'is tar-stained grubby 'and,
 'Fore 'e's 'eaving on a capstan bar
 And singing "Rio Grande."

I lays off watch, in a dripping bunk
 And 'ears my messmates snore,
 And I says to myself, "I'll chuck the sea
 As soon as I gets ashore."
 I thinks that I'll make for some quiet spot
 Where it's always a 'oly calm
 And get a job a-steering pigs
 On a blooming little farm.

But it ain't no use for me to try,
And I've given up all 'ope;
For I always wakes in a runner's den
With a mouth like a bar of soap.
It doesn't take much red-eye booze
To floor us poor galoots,
And the crimps they soak my month's advance
For a knife and some leaky boots.

I know some day when the watch is called
Old Jack won't come on deck,
And they'll find me dead in my sodden bunk
A tired-out, toil-marked wreck.
And they'll sew me up in a canvas shroud
And lower me over the side,
While the old man enters in the log,
"Jack Jones (A. B.) 'as died."

The Brass-bound 'Prentice Boy

I've held command of first-class craft a dozen years or more

But I cannot say that I have peace of mind,

For I've found responsibility is wearing on the nerves

And fears of wreck are hard to leave behind.

But sometimes memory takes me back to my brass-bound
'prentice days

When I signed indentures for my maiden trip

And life was full of frolic those care-free, joyous days

When I served my time aboard a sailing ship.

The magic touch of Father Time has glorified those days,
The bright side is the only one to take:

The dim and dirty half-deck and the dreary cracker hash

Have faded like a mail-boat's creamy wake.

Lord! How we swaggered up the streets in all our brass-bound
pride,

In Sydney, Durban, Bombay and the Sound;

What yarns we told when we got back, of ports across the sea,

And how we drove the old ship homeward bound.

It was just one long vacation in the good old Sydney days,
We were always glad to dress and get ashore;
For the sailing ship apprentices were always sure to find
A welcome and an ever open door.
The ladies at the Institute would take us home to tea
And meet our tales of hardships with a tear;
But we were second voyage boys and just as hard as nails
And we criticised their make-up over beer!

We went aloft and furled a sail with any fo'e'sle Jack;
We did the work of two A. B.'s afloat;
We backed the mates whenever there was trouble with the
hands,
We could sing a chanty, fight, or pull a boat.
We had no cares, we had no fears, we lived but for the day;
Just healthy youngsters difficult to train;
And often as I tramp the bridge and smoke my lone cigar
I wish I was a brass-bound boy again!

Circus Bill's Career

I 'as a yarn to spin you of a bloke named Circus Bill,
A most peculiar sailorman was 'e;
For 'e used to work with Barnum's 'fore 'e fell in with the
crimps

And was broken to a donkey's life at sea.
'E'd go aloft and do 'is tricks upon the topsail yard,
The same as 'ow you see 'em in the shows;
For Bill could walk along the spar a-standing on 'is 'ands,
Then drop and catch the footrope with 'is toes.

I've often seen 'im 'anging from the backstay by 'is teeth
A-showing of the crew wot 'e could do,
And I've seen 'im do a 'igh dive from the fore t'gallant yard
And finish up by 'anging to the clew.
That man would use our royal yards as 'orizontal bars,
We'll never see sich bloomin' tricks no more.
For Bill would tumble through the air a-turning somersaults
And travel from the mizzen to the fore.

'E was such a blooming genius that of course 'e couldn't last,
Like all these clever blokes 'e met 'is fate;
And it happened when our Willyum got a punch upon the jaw
Through talking to our bucko bluenose mate.
The blow it sent 'im crazy and 'e finished 'is career,
By an absolutely strike-me-pink display;
And the way 'e tore around aloft just like some big baboon
Will stay with me until my dying day.

The Old Man nigh went crazy when 'e chucked 'is eyes aloft,
For Bill was acting skittish as could be;
And the skipper says "'oo is that man a-standing on 'is 'ead,
And kissing of 'is blooming 'and to me?"
Then Bill lets out an awful yell and climbs up to the truck,
And there 'e stood a-bowing left and right
'E gave a jump, turned over twice and s ruck the mizzen
shrouds,
And sank into the ocean out of sight.

The Prevaricating Coon

I've seen some blooming queer mistakes and most peculiar things,

Since I 'ave earned my living on the sea,
But the most remarkable event I've checked up in my log
I call the case of stateroom thirty-three.
It 'appened on a southern run—the line I won't disclose—
The story never 'as been told ashore,
But things was free and easy on that kind of packet then;
We'll never see such 'appy days no more.

We 'ad a nigger passenger in stateroom thirty-three
'Oo for some blooming reason went and died.
The skipper 'ad the bloke sewn up, with firebars at 'is feet,
In readiness to 'cave 'im overside.
The weather it was boisterous; in fact, it blew a gale,
Which caused the funeral to be delayed—
For the skipper 'e decided that 'e wouldn't plant the coon
Until a good fair weather course 'e made.

The nigger brought us trouble for we couldn't lose the gale;
The winds blew 'igh—as also did the coon.
And as we shipped the water green it plainly showed to us
That something 'ad to 'appen very soon.
At last the skipper changed 'is mind and sings out to the mate
To take a trip to stateroom thirty-three.
"Just grab that Ethiopian," was the order that 'e gave,
"And drop that bunch of trouble in the sea."

About an hour afterwards the old man went below
To see the job was carried out with care;
'E looked into the stateroom and 'e nearly threw a fit
To find the Ethiopian still there!
'E sends a quartermaster for to fetch the mate along
To log 'im for neglect of duty, see?
But it seemed the mate misunderstood the number of his room
And grabbed a coon in cabin twenty-three!

"I 'ad an awful job, sir, for to get the beggar down,"
Was 'ow 'e started in to tell the tale.
"The way the nigger fought and scratched and bit and kicked
and swore,

Was like attending at a bargain sale.
The coon declared 'e wasn't dead, nor even feeling sick,
But as I got 'im down I 'ad to snigger;
'E arsked me for to spare 'is life and said 'e was alive,
But of course you can't believe a blooming nigger!"

The Song of the Second Mate

I am thinking hard as I smoke my pipe
 By the light of the bunkhouse lamp,
 For I'm face to face with a problem stiff
 In this British Columbia camp.
 I am finding out what I've heard before—
 That those who have served the sea,
 Can never entirely lose her grip
 Or forget her mystery.

We battered our way from Liverpool
 For a hundred and sixty days,
 With general cargo for Puget Sound—
 It's a run that seldom pays.
 We got the same old dusting as we beat about the Horn
 And when we had reached our Fifty West
 Some of spars were gone.

I was sick of the life and the wet and the toil
 And the stinking, rotten grub,
 And I swore I would never sign again
 In a stick and canvas tub.
 The homeless, hopeless, roaming life
 Has lost its charm for me,
 And I took a shellback's solemn oath
 That I would quit the sea.

So I jumped my ship and I headed north
And for months I was satisfied,
As I worked in the woods of this northern land
Away from the whimpering tide.
But somehow of late I am restless,
And I hear in the mountain breeze,
The hum and the sob of the ocean wind
And the roar of the driving seas.

So I'm going back to the coast again,
To the trade of the British born.
To sign in a schooner to China Seas,
Or a grain ship round the Horn;
And never a song will sound so sweet
To my sea-starved soul, I know,
As the shellbacks singing "Rio Grande,"
As we hitch up for the tow.

A Longshore Litany

It ain't no milk and honey for to earn your blooming money
 A-pushing of a blasted two-wheel truck,
 And it's 'ard to get a living at the wages they is giving
 So I've often swore I'd give the job the chuck.
 For the 'longshore life is rotten and it shouldn't be forgotten
 That it's all 'ard work with nothing much to show;
 But although I grouse and grumble, I can never take a tumble,
 And I've 'ung around instead of letting getting go.

There ain't much fun in toiling when the summer sun is boiling
 And there ain't much comfort in a vessel's 'old,
 It is 'eave and sweat and 'ustle through the 'eat and noise and
 bustle,
 And you dreams of beer that's foaming good and cold.
 It's like a blooming battle for to 'ear the winches rattle
 As they lift and jerk the cargo siings away,
 When we're through we go and swaller many long ones with
 a collar,
 For we're putting out a thousand tons a day.

There is cause for some complaining when you wakes to find it
raining,

And the wet and weary winter setting in—
You don't feel much like joking as you feel the water soaking
Through your tattered, battered clothing to the skin.
It's a life you wouldn't relish, for those sodden wharves is
'ellish,

And the day seems never coming to an end.
When it does we all get frisky on some rotten red eye whiskey,
And the bit of coin we've earned we goes and spend.

Yet the longshore life enfolds us though I don't know why it
'olds us—

I've gone away but always drifted back,
For my blooming mind kept slipping to the sounds and sights
of shipping

So I pulled my freight and 'eaded down the track.
It's off and on employment, and you don't get much enjoyment,
But there's something keeps us to it just like slaves.
It's the bustle and commotion, and the smel' of mother ocean,
Which will chase us from our cradles to our graves.

The Joys of a Sailor's Life

I like to listen to long-haired youths
 Singing a song of the sea;
 They chant of the joys of a sailor's life,
 Which they argue is happy and free.
 They warble away in a reedy voice
 Of a home on the bounding wave,
 And give the impression that down in the deep
 Is a most desirable grave.

A sailor's life is a dandy life,
 Without a shadow of doubt;
 It's seldom you get to your own home port,
 For most of the time you're out.
 It sounds quite nice in a baritone song
 To boast of a life on the foam,
 But a man who's been tramping a couple of years
 Would like just a week at home.

You say good-bye to your winsome wife
 As you rush to rejoin your ship;
 You've just had time for a run down home
 At the end of the previous trip.
 It's a kiss and a hug and a murmured prayer
 As you go on the trail again;
 While your heart is aching for those you've left,
 And you cannot forget the pain.

It isn't so much the monotonous grub,
 Or the pitiful wage we earn;
 It's not the responsibility—
 That's the very first thing we learn.
 It's the lack of a home and the fireside glow
 That darkens the sailor's life;
 And a very full share of his sorrow and care
 Is borne by the sailor's wife.

The Bluenose Mate

You talk about Trafalgar, or the battle of the Nile,
 Port Arthur—where the Rooshians did a flop—
 Or any blooming massacre you like to bring along
 From good old Waterloo to Spion Kop.
 I would rather take my chances at the picnics that you name,
 And 'ave a gamble with a 'ero's fate,
 Than ship aboard a packet with that most in'uman thing,
 A bucko Nova Scotia bluenose mate!

'E ain't a 'uman being for 'e 'asn't got no 'eart,
 And 'e chivvies of the sailorman about,
 And you've 'ardly crawled into your bunk to get a watch
 below,
 Than 'e swings the yards and fetches all 'ands out.
 If you 'appens to talk back to 'im as sometimes men will do,
 You brings up in the scuppers with a bump,
 And when you've finished counting stars and spitting out your
 teeth,
 You carry out 'is orders on the jump.

You 'aven't got a blooming soul, you 'aven't got a mind,
 The slopechest separates you from your pay.
 'E clouts you if you're sulky which is nearly all the time,
 And it's blows if you 'ave anything to say.
 So let me go to battle where the bullets whistle thick;
 Where everything is nice to contemplate;
 But never send this fair-'aired boy another blooming trip
 With a 'ard case codfish smelling bluenose mate.

The Passing of Sail

Gone is the day of the lofty square rigger
 Canvas and cordage and round swelling sail,
 Towering upward from courses to royals,
 Gone is the song of the shrouds in the gale.
 Down at the wharf is a Blue Funnel liner
 Vastly impressive and broad as to beam
 Far out of water her tall sides are looming,
 Hurry and hustle have come in with steam.

Steam and efficiency, engines and progress,
 Making the schedule without a delay,
 Following sea routes as if they were railroads
 Reaching her ports on the advertised day.
 Into her vast holds the cargo is pouring,
 Twelve thousand tons she can carry with ease,
 Bound for the ports of the Far East and Europe.
 Solidly moving her bulk through the seas.

Think of the energy needed to drive her,
 Six thousand horse-power harnessed below!
 Fretting and fuming and whining and whimpering.
 Eager and anxious to get the word "Go."
 Lost, the romance of the barque and the schooner,
 Soon will the windjammer pass from the stage;
 While comes the freighter that looks like a warehouse,
 Practical ships in a practical age.

Shanghaied

I'm here on an old square-rigger,
 In a suit of slop-chest blue;
 I'm sick and I'm stiff and I'm weary,
 And I'm damned if I know who's who.
 My head is all worried and whirling,
 My tongue is as dry as lime,
 And I've come to the sad conclusion
 That I'm in for a hell of a time.

The last thing that I can remember
 Is in a Cordova street bar,
 When an affable stranger came near me
 And stood me a ten-cent cigar.
 We yarned and we smoked and we liquored,
 And we had no end of a lark;
 Then he stood me a ride in a taxi,
 And I woke up aboard this old barque.

Aboard of a crazy old windbag—
 You can hear her old hull fairly talk—
 Deep laden with lumber for Europe,
 And we get our next orders at Cork.
 I've lost a good job in Vancouver,
 And don't know a thing of the sea;
 But the mate says before we make landfall
 He'll shape up a sailor of me.

I went aft to find the jib downhaul—
For I had enough sense not to shirk—
But the mate hit me clean to the scuppers,
And said he would teach me my work.
So I've learned that the downhaul is forrard,
But that's only one string that I know,
And before I have mastered the rigging
I've a pretty hard racket to go.

Cape Flattery, 'way off to leeward,
Is flashing goodbye to this craft;
And my hopes cream away in the bubbles
On the wake as it streams away aft.
I'm shanghaied and in for a riot,
But I've learned a hard lesson this tide,
I'll never mix up with a stranger
In a seaport when I'm getting pied.

The Shellback's Christmas

It's Christmas Day tomorrow, and I'm sorter down at 'eart
 For it won't bring any cheerfulness to me;
 I'd rather be without it for it only makes me think
 Of the 'omes and friends I've left beyond the sea.
 I was a fool—as all men are—to leave a job ashore,
 To earn a scanty living on a ship;
 But it ain't no good repining for now it's plain to me
 That old Dame Fortune's given me the slip.

I'm laying in Vancouver in a 'ard-case Welsh-owned barque;
 The freights is low—you might say they was dead—
 They feed us in proportion on tack and margarine,
 And once a week we gets a smell of bread.
 The 'ands 'as all deserted and got a job in town;
 I'm just a pore old shellback left alone,
 With three or four apprentices to work the blooming ship,
 But I'm the bloke wot 'as to wash 'er down.

The old man met some agents and they've took 'im out to dine,
 The boys' 'as got their buttons clean and bright;
 The ladies at the Institute 'as said "Pore little dears,"
 And took 'em to the theatre tonight.
 But pore old Jack is all alone a-keeping ship today
 And thinking of the days of long ago
 Before 'e signed the articles and took 'is bag aboard
 —But I was young and didn't 'ardly know.

Tomorrer I'll clean up a bit and take a run ashore,
 And don my suit of rusty slop-chest blue;
 I'll look in at the mission and swill some blooming tea,
 Then see a moving picture show or two.
 And that'll be my Christmas Day upon this blooming beach,
 And as soon as it is over I'll be glad;
 For I'm a proper foe'sle wreck, a down-and-out old tar,
 And rapidly a-going to the bad.

"Missing"

Her decks are white, and her brasswork bright,
 And her clean lines part the foam;
 She is outward bound from Puget Sound
 While the crew sings "Rolling Home."
 She dips the ensign as she leaves,
 And shakes her topsails free,
 And the tugboats toot a hoarse salute
 As the vessel stands to sea.

The cables flash her sailing date
 And in homes far, far away,
 There are those who cheer when the news they hear
 And faithful hearts that pray.
 The mother yearns for her boy's return,
 Though she bows to God's decree,
 And her longing grows as she prays for those
 In peril on the sea.

A weary wait brings changes in
 And the worlds of men forget,
 But the ones that care face grim despair
 As they ask: "Is she spoken yet?"
 Month after month drags slowly on,
 And they learn with blanching lips
 Of the fate they feared when the vessel cleared—
 She is one of the missing ships.

A sullen coast and a weed-washed shore
 Where the thundering breakers din,
 And the seagulls cry to the naked sky
 As the hungry tide comes in.
 A splintered spar and a shattered boat
 On the jagged rocks are cast,
 And the sea clears up the mystery
 Of the missing ship at last.

The Millionaire A. B.

Bill Brogan was a sailor of a most peculiar kind,
 A type you don't encounter every day—
 For Bill had made some money by buying real estate
 One time when he was out Vancouver way.
 He bought a double corner with his little bit of coin
 When things were low and money rather tight;
 But in the course of twenty years a change had taken place
 And William now has lots of wealth in sight.

Now Bill had always told me that when he made his pile
 He was going on a most surprising trip;
 And he started in to realize the wish of his career,
 By purchasing a fine four-masted ship.
 He didn't go as passenger, but came and bunked with us,
 For I had joined the vessel as A. B.
 And the way that William carried on aboard that blasted craft
 Was a sight that fairly staggered even me.

He'd chosen as his officers some men whom he disliked;
 He'd met them when he sailed before the mast.
 And as they called him "owner" and always added "sir,"
 Bill says "I'm going to have my fun at last."
 He adds: "I'll live up forrard with the balance of the hands,
 And you must act as if I'm not retired;
 I want you to address me as a simple foremast hand—
 And if you don't, you'll blooming well be fired."

Well, then the picnic started—and of course it had to stop,
 Or otherwise we would have been a wreck—
 The mates would order Bill aloft; he'd say "Go plumb to hell"
 And they couldn't kick the owner round the deck.
 The Old Man chucked his hand in and brought the ship about,
 And says: "We're going home, and on the square
 I've sailed with thugs, and crooks and toughs, but I will not
 go to sea
 With a foc'sle hand who is a millionaire."

Run Down

Half speed ahead! The fog is rolling up,
 In woolly walls of vapor, damp and dense.
 Look out there forrard! Keep yourself alert,
 In fog a sailor needs an extra sense.
 Turn out the hands and send another man
 Upon the foc'sle head until it clears.
 Quartermaster! Rouse the skipper out
 I'm getting fairly jumpy with my fears.

Hard! What was that! A siren's sullen boom
 Coming across the heaving, hidden sea.
 There! There it goes, away to starboard now,
 But drawing nearer so it seems to me.
 Answer there quick! and wait for a reply,
 From this new danger of the misty deep.
 (A man would soon be naught but shattered nerves
 If he had many hours like this to keep).

What's that I see upon our starboard hand?
 A dim, gigantic shape is near us now,
 And, surely, as the magnet draws the steel,
 She's heading for us with her knife-like bow.
 Full speed astern! and throw your helm to port,
 Look lively if you do not wish to drown.
 Too late! Too late! All hands stand by the boats!
 Hang on there, boys! Good God, she's run us down!

The Southern Run

I have my battered sea-chest packed
 And all my shore debts paid,
 And I'm going on the Southern run again.
 I'm tired of city sights and smells,
 I've been too long delayed,
 So I'm going on the Southern run again.
 We'll get away at daylight,
 And the throbbing of the screw
 Will be my morning anthem as I rise,
 And the fresh sea wind will meet me
 While the salt spray's kisses greet me,
 And far astern the dark-blue coast line dies.

I have a world before me,
 Touched by Nature's magic wand,
 Oh, I'm glad I'm on the Southern run again,
 And though daily we'll see wonders,
 There are always more beyond,
 Yes, I'm glad I'm on the Southern run again.
 The heaving deck beneath me,
 The crumbling, roaring waves,
 The ever-changing, ever-restless sea,
 Bid me lose my heart's dull ache
 In the dappled, creamy wake,
 For the northeast trades will soon be meeting me.

There are purple-tinted islands
 In the tropic's drowsy glare,
 I'll see them on the Southern run again.
 And the plummy palms will beckon
 Through the spicy moonlit air,
 As we plough along the Southern run again.
 It will seem so fresh and charming,
 Though I've seen it all before,
 The leaping cascades echo in my brain,
 The summer seas are flashing,
 And the huge, green rollers crashing,
 And I'll see them on the Southern run again.

A Temperance Launching

It was in a little seaport,
 On the North Pacific Coast,
 When times were hard, and money rather shy;
 We all turned out to celebrate
 The launching of a ship;
 The day was hot and all hands mighty dry.
 A lady was to name the craft
 And christen her with wine—
 A beverage we seldom sighted then.
 The owner gave the booze to me
 To keep until the hour,
 And hide it from those thirsty-looking men.

As I lingered in the sunshine
 The wine looked nice and cool,
 And my chum Bill he said it was a shame
 To waste the sparkling bubbly
 On an ordinary ship.
 He looked at me—and saw I thought the same.
 So we opened up the champagne
 With ceremonial care,
 And, 'strewth, that joy-soup tasted good to me.
 We then refilled the bottle
 With some water from a spring,
 And corked it up with due solemnity.

We tied a ribbon round the neck—
 It looked the real thing.
 We reached the shipyard on the scheduled time,
 And thirsty mariners looked on
 And saw the bottle cracked,
 With looks which seemed to say it was a crime.
 The ship was named, we gave three cheers;
 She slithered down the ways
 And took the water as a good craft should.
 She's never had an accident
 And always got good freights,
 While that drink did Bill and I a lot of good.

My Yacht

I am owner, crew and skipper of a battered fishing boat
 That I purchased from a smoky colored Jap;
 She smells of sockeye salmon, for she's not a dainty yacht,
 And she's never won a sailing handicap.
 She's chipped, and stained, and homely, and she hasn't got a
 name;

Her hull is foul with Fraser River slime,
 But she's what you call "sea-kindly," and I get a lot of fun
 As I cruise around the Gulf in summer time.

She isn't much to windward, but she's hell upon a reach,
 Though her well-worn scanty sails are torn and tanned,
 Her gear is old and rotten, but she's just as much to me
 As the finest, trimmest cutter Fife has planned.
 I come creeping into harbor like a shabby deep-sea tramp,
 And I see the scornful yachtsmen taking stock,
 As I drop my jib and mainsail while the tackle whines and
 squeals—

Then over goes my anchor—it's a rock.

I perch myself to windward as the old craft slips along
 And gently heels towards the morning breeze,
 And my face is wet with spray-kiss that she throws up with
 her bows,

As she dips and slides along the rising seas.
 The tugging of the tiller and the hissing of the wake
 Sing a symphony of open-air delight
 As I thresh her out to westward through the blue-and-golden
 day,

Then come homeward on the dying breeze at night.

Winter Cruising

You can sing a song of the summer sun
And the golden beaches glowing
In the warmth of a blue-white August day,
With the west wind softly blowing.
Attired in ducks and dainty skirts
The young folks go a-cruising,
And the placid peace of the silent Sound
Is the weather of their choosing.

But, for me, the sting of the winter wave
As the bows through the seas go crashing,
The rock and the heave and the halt and the swerve
Of the league-free billows dashing.
As oil-skin clad I face the blast,
My fingers the wheel scarce feeling,
The blood of the Vikings still runs true
As my little craft goes reeling.

Then anchored safe in some sheltered cove
With the shipmate stove a-roaring,
I watch the juicy, sizzling steak
While my chum in his bunk is snoring.
When the coffee boils and the spuds are cooked
We eat with no thought of refusing;
Then a final pipe and a brief good-night—
Oh, it's me for the winter cruising.

A Spring Song

*A whisper from the woodland,
A symphony from sea,
A murmur from the mountains,
All stir the blood in me.*

The old craft lays upon the ways
Unpainted, rusty, soiled;
A hurrah's nest describes the best
The lines I neatly coiled.
The mud has dried upon her side,
A draggled craft is she;
The winter's snooze upon the ooze
Has weaned her from the sea.

But months have past and now at last
Comes cruising time again
And soon around the placid Sound
Her prow will plough a lane.
The galley fire will soon acquire
The knack of frying steak
And the little motor, running free,
The echoes will awake.

So I'm here in a pair of dirty ducks
And booted to the thigh,
With a faded sweater on my back
And the paint and paint brush nigh.
And I'm scraping her clean for the coming fun
And slapping the paint on free
Till she's ready and fit for the summer sun
And the kiss of the summer sea.

*A whisper from the woodland,
A symphony from sea,
A murmur from the mountains,
All stir the blood in me.*

A Song of a Sweater

I'm ready to sail on my opening cruise
 The engine is working divinely;
 I've taken on water and lashins of booze,
 The brasswork is glittering finely.
 My gear is in order and things are O. K.
 And everything's up to the letter;
 But the fly in the ointment on this summer day
 Is—where the hell is my sweater?

I left it on board when the craft was hauled out
 At the end of a crackerjack season;
 I stowed it away, without any doubt,
 In a place I selected with reason.
 I've ransacked the lockers without success
 In a desperate effort to get her;
 The cabin is simply a horrible mess—
 Oh, where the hell is that sweater?

The rest of the fleet is slipping away,
 The picture they make is alluring;
 And soon they will sway to the roll of the bay,
 While I fret and fume at the mooring.
 I've everything else that a yachtsman requires,
 My outfitting couldn't be better.
 And if I could start I'd be up with the flyers—
 Oh, where the hell is that sweater?

The Capilano Road

The bells chimed faintly from the Indian mission
 Marking the passing of the summer night,
 The sea-wind kissed my slumber-laden eyelids
 Calling me to a day of pure delight.
 Peak after peak ranged up against the skyline
 Fit setting for a mountain god's abode,
 While, ever onward, ever upward,
 Bravely swept on the Capilano road.

Skirting the canyons, faring through the forest,
 Striking out boldly toward the giant hills,
 Winding its way beneath the shaggy ramparts
 On to the pass its purpose it fulfils.
 Roaring of waters coming through the canyon
 Tell us where, ages past, the river flowed,
 While in the trees, the tremor of the trade wind
 Joins in the music on Capilano road.

Life has its trail of wonder-working windings,
 Torrents of trouble, mountains of mistake;
 Forests of fear and little lakes of laughter;
 Canyons of cunning; clouds without a break.
 But, if we keep our gaze upon the skyline,
 Cheerfully, willingly, bear our little load,
 So shall we win the land beyond the Passes,
 Learning the lesson of Capilano road.

The Coast of Romance

The warm, lazy tropics; the sweet-scented homeland,
 Have each, in their turn, laid their glamour on me.
 The tall, nodding palms and the deep lanes of Devon
 Have whispered a message from over the sea.
 But here on the westering slope of the Rockies,
 Where men follow blindly the Goddess of Chance,
 The charm of the life has forever enthralled me—
 Willing slave I to this Coast of Romance.

The Coast where the weather-cured miner or logger
 Just "opens her out" when he comes into town;
 The coast where the glare and the noise of the city
 Is brazen and new 'neath the grim mountains' frown.
 The Coast where the past rubs along with the present;
 The men of the wilds you can tell at a glance.
 The Coast of the Siwash, the sailor, the potlach—
 The wonderful life on the Coast of Romance.

An Aerial Love Song

The aeroplane is waiting at the hangar in the hollow,
 So put your wraps on, dearest, your warmest and your best,
 For skyward we'll go, darting like a swiftly-swerving swallow
 To my simple summer mansion on Grouse Mountain's
 snowy crest.

As we gain our elevation we will see the town beneath us,
 Wheeling round the compass from the Fraser to Howe
 Sound,

A great and glorious heritage our hardy sires bequeathed us
 When they swung their ringing axes and cleared the virgin
 ground.

I remember hearing stories of the early days in Gastown,
 When the couples went a-courting in a little log canoe,
 And they told the same old story as they paddled through the
 silence

That I'm thinking of today, dear, as I fly aloft with you.
 Though countries may develop, and our modes of travel alter,
 There's a song which never changes in its wonderful refrain,
 And the talk of foolish lovers from their trembling lips will
 falter,

Though it's murmured in a buggy, a canoe, or aeroplane.

H. M. S. New Zealand
(Vancouver, 1913)

From the far-off Isles of the Silver Fern
To the Land of the Maple Leaf,
Comes the gift which the youngest Daughter State
Sent to the Crown's relief,
To take her place in the fighting line
If ever the need should come,
To lay her guns through the smoking brine
At the roll of the battle drum.

She carries a message of sober thought
To the ports of the Seven Seas,
A message which speaks of a strong chain wrought
From a child to its mother's knees.
And the chain is formed by the Links of Love
Which will stand the test that day
When the mailed fist peeps from the velvet glove
And the battle bugles bray.

H. M. C. S. Rainbow

(War, 1914)

*The Rainbow stood for Hope
In ancient song and story.
The Rainbow stands for Hope
In the wake of Britain's glory.*

Its broken sleep in the hammocks
With the course laid Southward Ho,
While the hands stand by
For the Bosun's cry
In the fitful watch below.
And through the night, with shrouded light,
The little cruiser surges,
And the gun crews fret and groom their pet
While the salt seas sigh their dirges.

The old White Ensign streams out aft
As the dawn breaks through the sky
And the grey seas toss a friendly crest
As the cruiser slithers by.
The engines sob to the thrust and throb
And sing the Song of Duty
As the Rainbow runs her southern course
For Empire, Home and Beauty.

An ancient cruiser? Granted,
And the men are ancient, too,
For they're out to meet a foeman
As Nelson used to do.
The same old ancient spirit
Will stand the test today
For our sons-o'-guns will meet the Huns,
And fight—not run away.

*The Rainbow stood for Hope
In ancient song and story.
The Rainbow stands for Hope
In the wake of Britain's glory.*

"Got 'Em at Larst!"

(Falkland Islands, December, 1914)

Got 'em at larst, Bill, got 'em at larst,
 Did you 'ear what the old man said?
 Passing the word to the Number One
 "Enemy right ahead."
 Yer know they allus 'angs theirselves
 If you gives enough of the rope,
 So here's a shot for the Monmouth, Bill,
 And one for the old Good Hope.

Got 'em at larst, Bill, got 'em at larst;
 Did you see that funnel go?
 I caught it fair on the blooming nose,
 Now I'll take 'em all in a row.
 Just three left, now watch me, Bill,
 Yer dear, old smiling rogue.
 There's one for the Cressy and Aboukir
 And another one for the Hogue.

Got 'em at larst, Bill, got 'em at larst;
 There goes the Scharnhorst now,
 And the other cove with the funny name
 The blooming Gernice-ee-now
 It's just the same as eating pie
 With a nice new silver fork,
 Swing 'er around a point or two
 And I'll send a shot for the Hawke.

Got 'em at larst, Bill, got 'em at larst;
 Right in the open sea,
 Two of the blighters is digging out
 And I've landed the other three.
 I lost my chum in the Monmouth
 Around in that Chile fight,
 But I'll sleep a little better now,
 He's got company there tonight.

Reinforcements of the Seas

There's a whisper on the waters
 Where the battered freighters go;
 There is news of vessels coming
 To replace the ones below.
 And the sea-stained plunging steamers
 Pass the word from ship to ship
 As they meet each other rolling
 Every wet and weary trip.

Hear the stately, graceful liners
 Tell the story to the fleet,
 Handing on the welcome message
 To the many craft they meet.
 "Cheer up, sisters, new ships coming,
 Quite respectable, I'm told,
 And our most exclusive circles
 Will admit them to the fold."

Hear the deeply-laden collier
 And the dingy, rusty tramp,
 Just a-gossiping quite cautious,
 And a-Morsing on the lamp;
 "'Ere's the new blokes coming 'andsome,
 Pipe the ensign in the breeze,
 All a-rolling 'ome to England,
 Reinforcements of the seas."

They Struggled On

(Scott Antarctic Expedition.)

Day after day they fought like men possessed
Against the massed battalions of the storm,
Sliding and slipping as they staggered on,
Dreaming delirious dreams of houses warm.
Half-mad, half-starved, half-dead, they battled north,
Comrade true to comrade through this strife;
Soldier and sailor helped each other up
Until each murmured, laying down his life:

“I struggled on.”

They struggled on.

Reared in the ice a lone cross marks the grave
Of those who met their death as fearless men,
With no complaint nor whine, but, till the last,
Keeping the record of their work. And then,
Facing their God, serene in the belief
That, duty done, a long, long rest was earned,
They died, and dying, perished with the faith
That on the nation's memory was burned:

“They struggled on.”

Khaki and Kilt

(August, 1914.)

Swinging along through the crowded streets
 The garrison makes its way,
 Shoulders square to the bugles' blare
 And proud of the service today.
 Steadily marching to church parade,
 Clean in body and soul
 And a smile on the face as a sign of the race
 Which springs to the muster roll.
 Khaki and kilt, khaki and kilt
 Hear the song that the bugles lilt.

There's a hush in the vast arena
 As a prayer from the chaplain comes,
 And the Spirit of Peace seems brooding
 O'er the flag-draped battle drums.
 And there comes an inspiration
 Which will keep their Honor bright
 That the quarrel is a just one
 For our Freedom and the Right.
 Khaki and kilt, khaki and kilt
 Hear the song that the bugles lilt.

In the hush of the Great Arena
 When the last dread war is done
 And the broken regiments muster
 And the last shot leaves the gun,
 They will face the Mighty Chaplain
 With unsullied honor then
 For they drew the sword for justice
 And lived and died like men.

Khaki and kilt, khaki and kilt,
 Hear the song that the bugles lilt.
 Scarlet tunics on troopers trim,
 Red Cross men of a service grim,
 Sixth and Seaforths and Fusiliers,
 Army Service and Engineers,
 Khaki and kilt, khaki and kilt,
 Hear the song that the bugles lilt.

Our Dead

(Ypres, April, 1915.)

Ours the never-ending heartache,
Ours the touch of sorrow's hand,
Ours the loss of loyal loved ones
In a far and foreign land.
Theirs the glory of the conflict
And the patriot fire inspired;
Theirs the stern, mad joy of fighting—
And they died as they desired.

We must honor all our heroes,
Who have given of their best;
Laid their lives down for the Empire
And the glory of the West.
We must learn the noble lesson
That they taught with sacrifice—
"Play the game and do your duty;
Honor first at any price."

But the tears will rise unbidden
As we scan the lists anew,
And our heart-strings strain to breaking
As we think of those we knew.
Eyes a-shine with noble purpose—
How we cheered them on their way—
Now our dead will march beside us
And in memory hold sway.

In Memoriam

The tremor of the organ dies away;
The congregation stands in silent thought,
The slowly, sadly passes from the church,
Counting the cost of victory dearly bought;
Thinking of gallant lads who laid their lives
Upon the steps of Freedom's altar grand,
Who, by their noble, final sacrifice,
Have barred the tyrant from their native land.

Then, as the Dead March crashes out its chords,
Triumphantly its closing peals arise,
Waking the patriot fire within our hearts,
Drying the misty tears which dimmed our eyes.
Duty has called, and they have heard the call,
And Canada United now will face
With stouter hearts the burdens of the war;
Our men chose Death and Duty—not disgrace.

Only a Year Ago

(August 4, 1915.)

Only a year ago today, what have we learned since then?
Only the price of sacrifice and the right to call ourselves men;
A fight which has made us a nation, a fire which has tried our
soul

And the proud glad thought which the struggle brought:
We are honored and clean and whole.

Only a year ago today, but, oh, what a change has come;
We have knitted together an Empire at the muttering of a
drum.

For we gazed over wastes of waters to the homes where our
fathers sat

And proclaimed to the world we were British
(And we stand or we fall by that.)

And Canada fought in Flanders, while down in the Darda-
nelles

The men from the south Dominions faced the blast of the
Turkish shells.

Over the veldt and the kopjes, South Africans armed and rode
And hunted the Hun from their borders, and followed the
Britishers' code.

And what of the silent Navy, the ships which we never see?
Keeping their never-ceasing watch that our commerce may
go free.

Our merchantmen are moving, our tramps still roll along
With the old Red Ensign over them from London to Hong-
kong.

We can not swerve or falter, we're into this to stay;
We can hear our kinsmen calling and the battle bugles' bray.
There are graves which we must honor (will you e'er forget his
face?)

Don't you think that he is calling YOU to go and fill his
place?)

Only a year ago today since we left the axe and plough,
A nation young and faulty then, but what do they call us now?
A country which has triumphed for Canada's good name,
We chose the straight and narrow path to shelter Freedom's
flame.

A Patch and a Smile

With a patch on the eye—and a smile,
That's how the boys came home,
Shattered and broken and lame
After fighting across the foam.
With a patch on the eye—and a smile,
Think of it, we who stay,
That the men who fought and liberty bought
Came home with a patch—and a smile.

With a patch on the eye—and a smile,
That's how the boys came back.
Wounded and sick and weak
—And some from the German rack,
With a patch on the eye—and a smile,
Oh, what a spirit it shows,
Can we ever repay for ever and aye
The boys with the patch—and a smile?

With a patch on the eye—and a smile,
As the train came rolling in,
Limping and white and hurt
But—all with the British grin,
With a patch on the eye—and a smile,
What shall we do for them?
They have shown their grit—we must do our bit
For the boys with the patch—and the smile.

To a Shipmate

A continent and ocean bar the way
To that lone grave—Somewhere in France;
But many loving hearts are there today
Beside that boy—Somewhere in France.
Far from the sun-warmed, fair Pacific Slope
He sleeps—Somewhere in France.
Inspired by love of country, Youth and Hope
He died—Somewhere in France.
The noble chivalry of days gone by
Is still alive—Somewhere in France.
Canadians still believe it grand to die
For Truth—Somewhere in France.
And what if one so young has had to go
And meet his God—Somewhere in France?
He fought for us against a dastard foe,
So rest his soul—Somewhere in France!

A Cheery Chanty

When things are looking black
 And overcast the sky,
 Just wander to the wharves
 And watch the ships go by.
 Just meditate a bit
 On what those vessels mean
 And draw a little comfort
 From the ships that you have seen.

From Sydney who goes forth?
 From Auckland who goes free?
 From Capetown who swings clear?
 Who has the right of sea?
 Whose ships are still afloat?
 Whose vessels face the gale?
 Whose steamers churn the foam?
 Whose barques cast loose the sail?

Who clears from old New York?
 Who sails from out the Plate?
 Whose ensign do you see?
 Just off the Golden Gate?
 Whose vessels leave the Sound?
 Whose cross Columbia Bar?
 Whose ply the Persian Gulf?
 Whose flag at Zanzibar?

Oh, shipmates, just brace up,
 Let loose a cheery song,
 Thank God we've got a navy
 (And thank that navy strong),
 No German flag is flung
 Mastheaded to the breeze,
 So take a swig and light your pipe,
 We DO control the seas.

Two Winds

Foam-flecked, the Inlet waters greet the eye,
 Kissed by the kindly west wind into life,
 While dainty pleasure craft go sweeping by—
 Youth at the helm, and mirth and music rife.
 The mellow August sun bathes in its rays
 The stately purple-tinted treeclad slopes;
 These are the dreamy, drowsy summer days,
 Filled with contentment, bringing to us hopes.

The east wind brings the rain in driving squalls,
 The harbor shrouds itself within a haze
 From out of which a vessel's siren calls—
 These are the wet and weary winter days.
 The sodden wharves—deserted, bare and bleak—
 Are lapped by waters—sullen, gloomy, gray;
 While, as the rainfall drums upon the teak,
 The 'longshire worker earns his scanty pay.

But through the summer sunshine, winter gloom;
 Through all the varied changes of the year,
 When through the fog the inbound vessels loom,
 Or in the August sunshine stand out clear—
 The 'longshore life still holds me in its grip,
 The brine-washed wharves will never let me go.
 The salt sea air, the men, the scenes, the ship—
 The 'longshore life is mine—I love it so!